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The Medical History of Menilek II,
Emperor of Ethiopia (1844-1913):
A Case of Medical Diplomacy

Chris Prouty Rosenfeld

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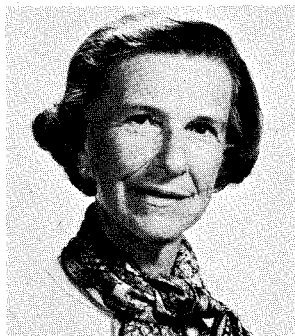
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A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chris Prouty Rosenfeld has succeeded in many diverse roles: as CBS researcher for Jackie Kennedy's "Tour of the White House"; as an organizer of the Saba Saba festival in Dar-es-Salaam; as a director of a United States exhibit in Addis Ababa; and as the mother of four grown children, among other things.

But this publication arises from what she describes as her "infection with Ethiopian history beginning in 1965." She has written scripts for Ethiopian radio, compiled an index to the Ethiopian

Observer; given papers at Haile Selassie University, Harvard, and Michigan State; and has in progress a biography of the Empress T'aitu (c. 1850-1918) as well as a history of "Imperial Women of Ethiopia from the Sixth Century B.C. to 1974."

This scholarly study, involving some fascinating medical detective work, is buttressed by extensive references run to earth in a large number of relatively obscure publications.

Edwin S. Munger

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Menilek II, Emperor of
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THE MEDICAL HISTORY OF MENILEK II,
EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA (1844-1913):
A CASE OF MEDICAL DIPLOMACY

Chris Prouty Rosenfeld

INTRODUCTION

An awareness of the mental and physical health of Emperor Menilek II is vital to an understanding of his rule of Ethiopia between 1889 and 1913. His passionate interest in "European" medicine and its practitioners encouraged the French, German, Italian, Russian and British missions in Addis Ababa to indulge in "medical diplomacy," a method of influence that had its twentieth-century counterpart when Middle Eastern princes and African heads of state sought medical care at London clinics or at United States or Russian hospitals -- the costs of which were frequently put on a voucher to be paid by the foreign office of the host country in the interests of political clout.¹

The privileged relationship of doctors to rulers is an ancient and universal phenomenon. In Ethiopia's case, the country's geographic and political isolation cut it off from the development of medical sciences as they evolved in Egypt, Phoenicia, Byzantium, and the Greek and Roman empires.² Thus the modest medical talents of the Portuguese barber-surgeon Bermudez in the sixteenth century, and of the French doctor Charles Poncet in the seventeenth, so impressed the Ethiopian emperors that they were entrusted with diplomatic missions to Europe.³

Doctors were an ideal choice as diplomats or explorers in hazardous lands. No well-planned venture into mysterious Ethiopia was without one, or at least had one member of the group who was given charge of the medicine chest after some basic training with a European physician.

Climatically, the diplomats, doctors, explorers, and merchants found Ethiopia a paradise, complaining only about the heavy rains from June to September. There were fleas and flies

to transport infection, but on the whole some of the doctors judged the standard of health to be remarkably high. In the capital city "they breathe the mountain air, drink water 'of the rock,' eat natural products," observed Dr. Mérab, who described the city as almost totally free of tuberculosis, typhoid fever, undulant fever, cerebral spinal meningitis; rare were the patients with dysentery, cancer, and grippe.⁴ Dr. Mérab stayed long enough, however, to find enough ailments to alter his optimistic outlook. An American doctor who had been with the U.S. Navy Medical Research Station at Gambela in 1976 regarded Ethiopia as a researcher's delight because there they discovered bacteria not found elsewhere in the world.⁵

The emperor, Menilek II, was the number one patient, and his passion for mechanical contrivances and science made him ideally susceptible to the art of medical diplomacy. Foreign legations vied with one another for the privilege of having a doctor of their nationality in the personal service of the emperor as it became obvious that Menilek listened to his doctor on political affairs as well as on matters of treatment.

Menilek's poor health was largely responsible for the crises in government rule from 1908 to 1913, its effect reaching even beyond his death into 1916. His wife, Empress T'aitu, an intelligent and strong woman, attempted to manage the country in Menilek's name. She was even accused of attempting to poison him. Her de facto rule, the coup d'état that deposed her, the appointment of an unstable youth as heir, the regency of Ras Tessema, all occurred in a miasma of intrigue that settled over and around Menilek's sickroom. Menilek lived to be 69, but the last four years of his life saw him recumbent on a bed, slumped in a chair, or propelled in a wheelchair as far as his chapel, a few hundred feet from his apartments on the palace grounds in Addis Ababa.

MENILEK'S HEALTH, 1884-1889

Nothing is known of Menilek's birth and early childhood except that he survived the unsterile conditions of birth and circumcision which help to limit the average Ethiopian lifespan to 30.⁶ For him to reach the age of 69 was a triumph over the area's endemic cholera, smallpox, leprosy, typhoid, malaria, and venereal disease. He survived the numerous military expeditions by which he subjugated tribes and extended his empire as well as the bloody conflict with Italy in 1895-1896.

Menilek's longevity (his father died of a disease at 30, his grandfather at 52, his mother at about 50) could be attributed to many factors. His 5'10" frame contained a robust physique, part of his inheritance from hardy Oromo (Galla) and Gurage stock, for his Christian Amhara royal ancestors had intermarried for generations with newly-baptized pagan and Moslem women. (The octogenarian Haile Sellassie I was descended from the female side of that same line and was Menilek's second cousin.) Menilek was

daring enough to fend off his religious adviser's fear of European doctors.⁷ He isolated himself during epidemics, and had the best food, drink, and care due him as a young prince, king, and finally emperor.⁸ His palace had water piped in -- one pipe for drinking, one for washing.

Ethiopia was not without native doctors, called hakims, whose skillful use of herbs plus faith cured many patients.⁹ There was a generous use of amulets, incantation, and distasteful porridges made of animals' insides. Honey in warm water was an antihemorrhagic specific after uvular and tonsil operations. Purgatives and bleeding were Ethiopian practices, as they were in Europe. Saliva was used as an antiseptic for wounds. The sun, however, was considered an evil force and the umbrella was, and is, indispensable to careful men and women.¹⁰ The Ethiopians took excellent care of their teeth, a custom one observer thought Europeans might well emulate. "With little twigs they constantly clean their teeth, no matter what time of day . . . and they are of stunning whiteness. . . . As for the upper classes, they wash their hands and carefully rinse the mouth both before and after meals."¹¹

Menilek's fascination with European medical methods did not make him insensitive to Ethiopian traditions. An Oromo bone-setter of proven skill was honored with a shirt of silk and given a ranking seat at banquets. The reputation of one syphilis-treater at court was so great that his opinion was sought before one of the courtiers would submit to a European doctor. Menilek resorted to religious pilgrimage for the relief of Empress T'aitu's sterility,¹² and in one instance upheld the efficacy of giving an antisnakebite potion to the messenger of the man actually afflicted, in the belief that the bitten victim could thus be cured!¹³

Menilek was a hard-working, early-rising monarch who observed the fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays for the sixteen days of the "Assumption of Mary" in August, and for the two months before Easter. Fasts were followed by gluttonous feasts, after which the king, as did everyone, took the bitter purgative made from the flowers of the kosso tree and mixed with honey, to expel the worms that inevitably accompanied the raw meat dipped in pepper sauce, a staple of every feast.¹⁴ The immoderate use of berbere (hot red pepper) was thought to be an unfair assault on the digestive organs by Europeans, but it was indispensable to Ethiopians. A pinch of pepper was even allowed in the glass of water taken during fasting periods.

The nemesis of Menilek was the syphilis he contracted in his youth.¹⁵ The symptoms were suppressed from time to time, but the spirochete was never killed. Late in his life, the invasion of his central nervous system and the resultant cerebral thrombosis killed him -- but with agonizing slowness.¹⁶

At least from 1868 when the Capuchin missionary Father

Massaia, with three years' medical training, arrived in Shewa, Menilek had access to the same treatment for syphilis as Europeans had -- mercury. Mercury in pills, in ointment, or by inhalation had been used in Europe since the sixteenth century and in China since around 2600 B.C.¹⁷ It relieved the pain but often caused teeth and hair to fall out. There is no proof, but it is a possibility that Menilek's premature baldness, by age 33 at least, was caused by mercury. However, he kept his teeth, so his mercury dosage did not have that possible side effect.

Menilek was just 24 when he met Father Massaia, who became very fond of the young king but frowned on his morals. The young man's penchant for women was not un-Ethiopian, but he shocked the Catholic priest. Massaia blamed this promiscuity on the bad example set at the court of Emperor Teodros, where Menilek had been a favored captive from the age of 10 until his escape at 20. Although he had married Aletash Teodros, Menilek left her behind when he escaped. Shortly after returning to his own province, he took up with Bafana, who was almost twice his age and the mother of eight children by various husbands.¹⁸

Massaia describes at length the prevalence of syphilis in Menilek's capital at Litché. "Since the court consisted of such young people, their passions boiled, and the result was that that revolting disease, it makes one sick to say the word, had so swamped the city that soldiers, high officers, honored matrons, even the very young of both sexes had it."¹⁹

Massaia tried hard not to get into medicine, knowing that his spiritual mission could easily be pushed to one side. It was Bafana who forced him into practice by bringing her nephew, badly deformed by a facial chancre, to him for treatment. He dared not refuse her. Soon, just as he had feared, his hut was surrounded with the sick or their emissaries. While doing hundreds of inoculations and treating about thirty of the gravest cases, he gave lessons in the catechism.

Bafana asked Father Massaia to persuade Menilek to consecrate their relationship, as then she would be able to produce an heir to the throne. The priest declined to press the king, who already had at least one child, a daughter Zauditu, by Woizero (Princess) Benchi, an Oromo woman from Wello.²⁰ Massaia was summoned to care for this five-year-old girl, sick with fever, who was in the care of Bafana at the time.

When Menilek asked the priest to recruit a European doctor for his court, Massaia was reluctant. To himself he justified his delay in the belief that only a fortune-hunting charlatan would leave a good practice to treat "barbarians." Actually he feared the blame if his recruit should turn out to be a failure. Word somehow reached Europe that Menilek wanted a doctor, and Massaia was criticized for blocking the search.²¹

It was from a French commercial traveller, Pierre Arnoux,

that Menilek acquired, in 1874, his first medicine chest and was instructed in its use. Arnoux taught Menilek the medical formula for each pill, powder, and liquid in the chest, though another Frenchman alleged that Menilek had forgotten everything he was taught ten years later because he had put massage balm into a footbath to cure his son of a fever.²² Arnoux also taught the king Arabic numerals, so that Menilek would be able to check invoices and case numbers on the merchandise Arnoux would be shipping. From medicine and math it was a short step to affairs of state. Arnoux produced for the king an essay on the causes of decadence and disunity in Ethiopia. The recommended remedy was for Shewa Province to apply itself to the prompt reorganization of the whole empire, with the help of a French colony of experts who would settle in Ethiopia under Arnoux's direction.²³ The Frenchman ignored the fact that the empire was being ruled by Emperor Yohannes, to whom Menilek made submission in 1878.

The Italians arrived in Shewa without warning. Arnoux's outgoing caravan crossed with an incoming Italian geographical expedition, whose members were the precursors of an Italian diplomatic effort that dominated the next seventeen years. One of the explorers, Chiarini, nursed Menilek through a serious illness not long after his arrival. Menilek considered that Chiarini had saved his life.²⁴ The young Italian engineer so enjoyed the privileges of the king's entourage that he was reluctant to embark on exploration with all its discomforts.²⁵

THE ITALIAN DOCTORS

At age 38, Menilek had already suffered syphilis, malaria and smallpox. He finally succeeded in acquiring a full-time physician in 1882, fifteen years after urging his friend Massaia to recruit one. This doctor was captured by Menilek during his war with King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam. Dr. Raffaele Alfieri had attached himself to the Gojjam lord under vague circumstances connected with an Italian commercial mission in northern Ethiopia.²⁶ Dr. Alfieri joined his employer-king in the fighting against Menilek at Imbabo in Gudru. Though wounded himself, he did not cease firing until he saw that King Tekle Haymanot had been captured. "Menilek, who loved courage, declared that Dr. Alfieri would remain with him,"²⁷ and he took Alfieri back with him to Shewa as part of the booty.

Dr. Alfieri spent many hours in Menilek's company and traveled with him on various military campaigns. When Antonelli arrived, commissioned by his government to negotiate a treaty with Menilek, he mentioned Alfieri with pride of nationality in his dispatches.²⁸ This praise appears insincere, however, since after a visit to Italy Antonelli brought back with him a new physician, Dr. Vincenzo Ragazzi, who became the director of the Italian geographical station. From then on, the dividing line between geographers, doctors, and diplomats became almost invisible. Antonelli wrote, "A doctor has been the great desire of Menilek

and now Italy will have the best means of stable representation in the kingdom."²⁹ Dr. Ragazzi, though in charge at the geographical station, replaced Alfieri as Menilek's chief doctor.

The new director was received with enthusiasm by Menilek but not by Dr. Alfieri: "Alfieri took umbrage and smoldered with rancor. . . ."³⁰ By September 1884, it was Dr. Ragazzi who was spending much time in the company of the king, and Dr. Alfieri had been rewarded with "vast lands in the province of Boulga."³¹ In all probability, Alfieri had been rewarded with nothing but subsistence. Both Alfieri and Ragazzi accompanied the army when Menilek conquered Harar in 1886. Alfieri boasted that he had been in the thick of the battle while Ragazzi was safely out of danger several kilometers away.³² Alfieri possessed bravado, but disregarded the rule that the duty of a doctor is to keep himself safe in order to be of use to the wounded.

One non-Italian doctor was consulted by Menilek during 1883-1884. A Belgian, Dr. Hamon, accompanied a French team searching for gold and coal in Shewa. Dr. Hamon was not permitted to go off prospecting, since the king "did not wish to deprive himself of his attentions."³³ It was probably Dr. Hamon who was mentioned unfavorably by a French trader, Soleillet, in July 1884. He noted, "There is a 'Paris' doctor who must leave with our caravan and one hopes that the witnesses to his conduct in Shewa are as indulgent as I am . . . I prefer to forget his name."³⁴

Menilek appeared particularly fit in September 1884, when he attended the horse games at Entotto. "The king is one of the most agile, audacious, and adroit riders," one of Hamon's companions remarked. And a few days later, he noted that Menilek was "absorbed in directing the building of Entotto; going, coming, surveying, encouraging the 5,000 workers with voice and gesture . . . taking measurements . . . nor does he hesitate to put his hand to manual labor."³⁵

Menilek broke off the seventeen-year relationship with Bafana ("they have not been happy since the death of their child")³⁶ and on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1883, espoused the well-born and mature (age 30 or more and four times married) T'aitu Bitoul Haile Maryam. Neither the French engineer d'Aubry, nor the Italian diplomat Antonelli, both of whom arrived within days of the ceremony, mention the event. Perhaps it was conducted with quiet discretion -- if not actually in secret -- though the day was described as one of great rejoicing throughout Shewa.³⁷

The stethoscope of medical diplomacy shifted to other ears in 1886. When Antonelli accompanied Menilek and his queen to a meeting with Emperor Yohannes IV, he found a Greek doctor, Nicholas Parisi, "a political agent of the King of Greece," in attendance at the imperial court. Parisi appears to have mis-translated deliberately a letter from Umberto, King of Italy, to Menilek, to make it appear that the Shewan king was being encouraged by Italy to rebel against the emperor. "He is our

ruthless and dangerous enemy," Antonelli wrote of Dr. Parisi.³⁸

During this political conference, the emperor ordered his vassal lords to be vaccinated for smallpox, as an example to the people. Dr. Parisi had imported the new vaccine from France, and had convinced Yohannes to publish an edict forbidding the people to use their usual method, variolation.³⁹ Menilek, long immune, with smallpox scars pitting his face, submitted nonetheless to the vaccination.

On the return journey, Antonelli persuaded Menilek to ignore Yohannes' order to expel all foreigners from Shewa. After the arrival of a huge caravan of guns, arranged by Antonelli, in April 1886, the tenure of Italian officials at Menilek's court was secure. A subsequent shipment of fourteen cases of medical supplies, surgical instruments, and medical books backed up the medical efforts of the Italian geographical station in Shewa.⁴⁰

Yohannes had sound reasons for his expulsion order. Italy had occupied Massawa, the main port of northern Ethiopia, in February 1885. Yohannes immediately expelled a group of Italians from Tigre, one of whom, Dr. Leopoldo Traversi, made his way to Shewa in June of the same year and was cordially welcomed by Menilek. Meanwhile, Menilek had agreed with Antonelli's suggestion to convert Ragazzi from doctor to diplomat and send him to Rome to explain in person what difficulties the Italian occupation of Massawa had made between the Shewan king and his emperor. Menilek did not want to provoke Yohannes into an invasion of Shewa by his hospitality to foreigners, but he could not deprive himself of the practical services of Antonelli and his compatriots.

Ragazzi's trip was delayed until October 1887, and Menilek ordered Dr. Traversi to stand by until his return.⁴¹ Traversi, a keen explorer, resented being confined to the relative boredom of the court. In the end, he became the most political of doctors, as well as an expeditor of guns and ammunition.

MENILEK BECOMES EMPEROR

Emperor Yohannes died fighting the Mahdists at Metemma in March 1889, and Menilek claimed the throne. His coronation did not take place until November 3, and the only foreign diplomat present was Dr. Ragazzi, who had returned from Italy (with 1000 guns) the year before. Dr. Traversi was in Italy with Antonelli, escorting Ras Makonen, who was Menilek's ambassador for the ratification of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, signed by Menilek at Wichale, May 2, 1889. On the ambassador's return from Italy in February 1890, Dr. Traversi replaced Ragazzi as director of the geographical station on the recommendation of Antonelli, who was critical of Ragazzi's taciturnity and lack of political sophistication. "Traversi knows Amharic perfectly, and though he lacks poise and is ambitious and pugnacious which forces him to err, he is nonetheless a man of action. Menilek loves and

respects him . . . as doctor and friend."⁴²

Diplomatic problems were insoluble even for the best of doctors after Menilek became aware that, under Article 17 of the treaty he had signed at Wichale, the Italians had notified the rest of the world that they held what amounted to a protectorate over Ethiopia. Then Menilek discovered that Italy was encouraging the ambitions of the Tigre lord, Ras Mengesha, his most determined rival. However, Mengesha made a formal submission to Menilek (March 16, 1890) just as Dr. Traversi was returning from Italy to Shewa escorting a caravan of silver talers, financed by Italy's four million lira loan to Ethiopia. Dr. Traversi was welcomed back courteously and soon after was called to do what he could for the Shewan army, which was being rapidly decimated by starvation and an epidemic of dysentery. Italy expressed its maximum medical-diplomatic efforts between 1890 and 1894 by assigning two doctors in addition to Traversi to diplomatic posts: one, Dr. Angelo de Martino, to Adwa, and the other, Dr. Cesare Nerazzini, to Harar. The Italian journalist Eduardo Scarfoglio asked acerbically in print, "From whence came this bizarre notion of using doctors to deal with difficult diplomatic problems. . . ? Does the government think a poultice is sufficient to overcome its mistakes?"⁴³

Times were bad in the first years of Menilek's reign as emperor. A cattle disease had begun in the north when the Italians unwittingly unloaded some infected cattle from India at Massawa, and it spread rapidly throughout the empire. Cholera, smallpox, and starvation took a terrible toll; by the time the famine abated in 1892 more than one-third of the population had died.⁴⁴ Preoccupied with these horrors, Menilek postponed a major confrontation with Italy over their violations of his sovereignty. A Russian visitor in 1891, who had seen Menilek three years earlier, noted a marked physical change in the monarch: "He has aged. . . , his beard is whiter . . . , he is heavier. . . ."⁴⁵ The story that Menilek had denied himself meat since his people had none became part of the Menilek legend,⁴⁶ though none of the Italians eating at Menilek's table in 1890-1891 mentioned this personal sacrifice.

Menilek suffered from rheumatism, and both he and the empress enjoyed immersing themselves in the hot springs of Finfini. The comforting effect of the waters after the bone-chilling dampness of Entotto was a factor in deciding to set the capital in Addis Ababa, near these springs.⁴⁷ One doctor blamed the frequency of rheumatic ailments on the high consumption of fermented (as opposed to distilled) beverages.⁴⁸

The empress's continuing sterility after seven years of marriage concerned Menilek. When the new Italian resident-general, Count Augusto Salimbeni, arrived (July 1890), Menilek was fascinated with his description of "hypnosis," since Salimbeni implied that it was possible to treat infertile women this way.⁴⁹ Salimbeni, though an engineer, had considerable medical knowledge from "reading books," and had cured Emperor Yohannes of a gum

infection. He "practiced" medicine in Gojjam while building a bridge there.⁵⁰

Menilek's health stood up to the heavy Italian diplomatic pressure on him from 1890 to 1894. Salimbeni had quickly perceived that Menilek was in no mood to settle problems over the "Treaty of Wichale" in any way that would favor Italy. Frustrated and ill, Salimbeni spent time at the geographical station of Let Marefia with Dr. Traversi, who lent his experience, knowledge of Amharic, and rapport with Menilek to the diplomatic effort. Both of them disagreed with Antonelli who, as architect of the troublesome treaty, returned with little warning in December 1890, to take over their stalled negotiations.

Both Traversi and Salimbeni were offended and angry. Antonelli's diplomatic effort included a hint of medical blackmail with Menilek: "If the king wishes a doctor to come here, he should not have him repair clocks, mend slippers or keep him too long, as doctors lose touch with new scientific discoveries and end up being worth nothing."⁵¹

Antonelli was no more successful with Menilek than Traversi or Salimbeni. All the Italians (except for an engineer, Luigi Capucci) left the country on February 20, 1891, on Antonelli's orders. Dr. Traversi returned briefly in 1892 and again in 1893, trying to stave off a final rupture with Menilek's Ethiopia.⁵² He was the last Italian to play the medical-diplomat role for some years, since Menilek mobilized for war with Italy in November 1895, when his country was invaded.

THE WAR WITH ITALY

The first major engagement took place on December 7, 1895, the second began on January 7, 1896, and the third, which resulted in the rout of the Italian army at the famed "Battle of Adwa," ended on March 3. During these three months of fighting, there was no foreign doctor with the Ethiopian forces. Dr. Eliseo Mozzetti crossed the lines on January 3 to treat an Ethiopian general who had fallen from a horse.⁵³ Ethiopian women were with the medical corps of the army, along with the hakim. Women carried food and water, reloaded weapons, prepared gunpowder, and dragged the wounded off the field. No one knows how many women were among the 15,000 dead and wounded in the war with Italy (14 percent of the total Ethiopian force, compared with Italian losses of 43 percent).⁵⁴ For many, to be wounded was to die; the Russian Red Cross listed only 425 war-wounded out of the 13,000 persons they treated in the five months after the war,⁵⁵ though of course many of the combatants had returned to their provinces and never came in contact with the Russian doctors.

THE RUSSIANS

No country made a greater impact medically than Russia. Russian doctors did more toward developing productive ties with Ethiopia than had earlier diplomatic missions (in 1885, 1889, 1891, 1895), which relied on the assumption that the monophysite church of Ethiopia was similar to the Russian Orthodox. The Ethiopian clergy treated all European claims to be Ethiopia's elder brothers in religion with disdain. But the people welcomed Russian medical aid warmly.

The Russian Red Cross mission arrived three months after the battle at Adwa. They reached Harar on May 28, 1896, and were stopped there by Menilek, who was suspicious, partly because more than half of the mission (sixty-one people) were military escort, and partly because he realized that there might be future complications. He was concerned that this mission would treat thousands of wounded and then return to Russia; mass exposure to modern medical attention might create expectations from his people for services that he, as ruler, would be unable to provide. Only the intervention of Menilek's Swiss adviser, Alfred Ilg, and of the Russian adventurer Nicolai Leontiev, to whom Menilek had taken a liking, unblocked the situation. Half the mission remained in Harar, where they set up a treatment clinic, and the other half, on its arrival in Addis Ababa on July 26, 1896, immediately set up a mobile field hospital with thirty beds.⁵⁶

The political value of the Russian medical team was envied by the French correspondent and not-so-secret agent C. Mondon-Vidhaillet, who bewailed to the readers of *Le Monde* the absence of any French effort on behalf of the returning Ethiopian warriors.⁵⁷

Menilek and his wife visited the Russian hospital, donned sanitary garments, and observed operations.⁵⁸ The emperor certainly took advantage of the presence of five Russian doctors for personal consultations, but available Russian records do not reveal what ailed him.⁵⁹ He did cancel an expedition in October 1897, supposedly because of illness, and repaired to the waters of Finfini.⁶⁰

Menilek entrusted a diplomatic mission to "Count" Leontiev in the postwar months, a natural spillover from the general good will toward the Russians, though Leontiev had nothing whatsoever to do with the medical programs and was heartily distrusted by the diplomatic mission that followed the doctors. Leontiev nonetheless remained in Menilek's good graces until 1902 when the emperor publicly disclaimed him.⁶¹

The American envoy Robert Skinner, who visited the Ethiopian capital for nine days in December 1903, observed that the Russians had the most considerable establishment in Addis Ababa, with a free hospital, a pharmacy, and a large staff of doctors and nurses; he concluded that the influence obtained by Russian

diplomacy operating along medical lines was immense.⁶²

The fact that the Russians gave Ethiopia its first hospital, published its first medical textbook in Amharic, and provided care by its medical missions resulted in a glowing tribute by the royal chronicler, who was generally reticent about any credit to foreigners.⁶³ But aside from establishing comparatively intimate relationships with high personages of the court, Imperial Russia derived few political advantages from its medical diplomacy. Its main objective was to frustrate British and Italian interests in the Horn, the Sudan, and Egypt, in cooperation with the French, and in this they failed.

POST-ADWA DIPLOMATIC AND MEDICAL ACTIVITIES OF FRANCE, BRITAIN, AND ITALY

Ethiopia's victory over Italy awakened a vivid international interest in the previously ignored empire. Menilek's hospitality was severely strained by the need to entertain some sixteen delegations, of which five were strictly diplomatic, that arrived between March 1896 and January 1898.⁶⁴

The English and French missions had doctors attached to them, and Menilek asked both for an X-ray machine as soon as its invention was described to him.⁶⁵ Chabaneix, one of the three Navy doctors that accompanied the French mission, described himself as an "official doctor to Empress T'aitu and the court." "Incontestable are [the doctors'] services to our cause," wrote a member of the Marchand expedition, and by "cause" he meant French political aims on the Nile.⁶⁶ Dr. H. Pinching of the British delegation gave a number of consultations to unspecified individuals during his two-week stay.

The French were stimulated to compete with the impressive Russian medical effort. They sent Dr. R. Wurtz in January 1898, to do research on and experiment with the control of "bovine peste." Dr. Wurtz brought large quantities of fresh Jenner vaccine for smallpox, and inoculated forty people while the emperor watched. Menilek told Wurtz to organize a vaccination service, and on May 12, 1898, announced obligatory vaccination, as Emperor Yohannes had done in 1888. Wurtz's supplies were sufficient for 250,000 people, "a drop in the bucket."⁶⁷

The Italians sent Dr. Cesare Nerazzini, who had been their representative in Harar before the war, to negotiate the peace treaty of October 26, 1896, which formally abrogated the "Treaty of Wichale" and recognized the sovereignty of Ethiopia. After arranging the repatriation of 1705 prisoners of war, completed within fifteen months after the end of hostilities, Dr. Nerazzini departed. Captain Federico Ciccodicola, a veteran of the recent conflict, became the head of Italy's peacetime legation and tried to revive medical diplomacy. "It would be useful for acquiring influence at the court of Menilek. A doctor is much

desired by the emperor and empress, since the Russian doctors are out of favor. Menilek has taken into his service a doctor of Abyssinian origin and another physician would add to the prestige of our legation, as Menilek could use him as needed."⁶⁸ There is no evidence that the Russians were "out of favor," and the Abyssinian doctor referred to, Dr. Charles Martin, was not in Menilek's service, since he had rejected an inadequate salary offer and had returned to his post with the Indian army in Burma after staying a year in Ethiopia.⁶⁹ A free clinic was opened next to the Italian legation in September 1901 by Drs. Domenico Brielli and Lincoln de Castro, and contributed greatly to repairing relations between Italy and Ethiopia.⁷⁰

Dr. W. Wakeman, A Eurasian surgeon, was attached to the British legation in 1898. In 1908 he had a "nervous breakdown" (a euphemism for drunkenness), went to London for treatment, then returned. A letter from the emperor, attesting to Wakeman's services, expressed the hope that the British government would reward him with a promotion. The letter was enclosed in the legation dispatch, vouching for Wakeman's attendance on Menilek "which redounded to the benefit of this legation."⁷¹

Apart from Dr. Wakeman's "when available" services, the British had no inclination to compete with the free clinics of the Italians and Russians. A recommendation by Dr. Arthur Hayes that the British establish a medical station "for popularity and prestige" was ignored in London.⁷²

MENILEK'S PHYSICAL DETERIORATION

A rumor that Menilek had been struck dumb by lightning surfaced from the coastal town of Zeila on October 8, 1895, but was never given credence. The source, Dr. Nerazzini, had just been expelled from Harar because Menilek was mobilizing for the war with Italy. On October 21 the same gossip was heard in Massawa, but the Italian commandant there wrote to Rome that intelligence reports did not confirm the death or paralysis of Menilek. Nerazzini commented that "all the details of a partial paralysis are too specific to judge them a total fake."⁷³ In the light of Menilek's subsequent medical history, there may have been some truth to this rumor of infirmity, though it certainly was not caused by lightning.

In December 1904, Menilek told his French doctor, Joseph Vitalien, that he had had some kind of attack -- a severe trembling in his lower limbs -- "about ten years ago."⁷⁴ Although the chronology is inexact, it suggests a possible correlation with the Italian report of 1895 and may have been the first time that the lurking spirochete affected his nervous system. Such a hit-and-run attack is characteristic of latent syphilitic infection. So, too, is a thirty-year incubation period, which would correlate with Menilek's initial infection in his youth.

The Cairo paper La Patrie reported in August 1901 that Menilek had suffered a "heart embolism." This was denied by a French consular officer arriving at Marseille from Ethiopia: "When I left Addis Ababa, Menilek was in excellent health."⁷⁵ The emperor also told Dr. Vitalien in 1904 that "three years ago" he had had an attack similar to the one of "ten years ago" but less severe.

Alfred Ilg, Menilek's Swiss adviser, was in Europe from February to December 1900, and again from June to December 1902. Usually discreet about his imperial employer, Ilg did not reveal any details about Menilek's health. In Zurich, in 1903, Ilg said that the rumors about Menilek's precarious health were "false from A to Z."⁷⁶ He denied the statement of a Greek (?) physician, Dr. Antomoglou, who told the Agence Fournier in July 1903 that he had been attending Menilek and Empress T'aitu for the previous year and that in spite of efforts to hide the condition of the sovereign, everyone in Menilek's hierarchy knew he was ill.⁷⁷ Despite Ilg's denials of Menilek's poor health, he left a note in his private papers that Menilek's powers of concentration began to decline during 1902.⁷⁸

The important question is whether Menilek's behavior and policies in 1901-1902 were affected by any diminution of his mental and physical capacity. One can only speculate that Menilek's fury at the French financial manipulations with the railway (he refused to attend the inauguration of the 310-kilometer line from Jibuti to Dire Dawa), his critical review of foreign monopolies and concessions in 1902-1903, and the apparent increase in the power of the empress, were a result of physical weakness in Menilek. But uneasiness about their personal security in the event of Menilek's death preoccupied foreigners and demonstrated that there was some reason to think the 57-year-old monarch -- usually so receptive to "modern" ideas and to foreigners in particular -- was in failing health.

France entered the medical-diplomatic arena by taking advantage of the French nationality and patriotism of the aforementioned Dr. Vitalien, a West Indian. He was a Paris-trained physician from Guadeloupe and had been recruited by Ras Mekonnin for a hospital in Harar in 1902.⁷⁹ Mekonnin relinquished him to the emperor at the end of 1904. The French "topped off" his salary with a "subvention" and continued these payments, confident that Vitalien's dark skin would give him a special rapport with Menilek. The French legation thus had the inside track on palace politics for the next four years.

THE FRENCH DOCTORS, 1904-1909

Dr. Vitalien's medical summary of December 20, 1904 was the first of many to appear at the Quai d'Orsay. "J'accuse syphilis dans jeune age," he wrote after Menilek told him of three previous attacks.⁸⁰ He found Menilek's thoracic organs and

heart normal, as were the liver and spleen, but he deplored the effect on the digestive tract of the "infamous" Ethiopian diet -- large quantities of hot pepper stews or raw meat, followed by two or three liters of honey wine (tej). Vitalien thought the emperor drank immoderately of Fernet Branca (a liqueur with a high alcoholic content and with aloes, strongly laxative in effect, as an ingredient) to which the Italians had introduced him. His storehouse contained at least 250 cases.

Vitalien found Menilek mentally alert: "He keeps a finger on everything going on in the empire." A few months later Vitalien reported that Menilek had "a slight cerebral resistance," and he was told by attendants that the emperor could not, as he had before, converse for a long time on the same subject; to mask his fatigue he changed the subject frequently.⁸¹

Vitalien concluded that Menilek could live a good many years if he sustained a more reasonable pace: less work, less drinking, and some care with his diet. He could then postpone the cerebral damage that would ultimately trap him.

From December 1904 to May 1906 no medical crisis of Menilek's appears in the French diplomatic reports. From a German doctor, Dr. Hans Vollbrecht, who accompanied the first mission from Kaiser Wilhelm in February 1905, we learn that he treated Menilek for a cold and noted his general agility and good health. Dr. Vollbrecht was also consulted by the empress and by various plump ladies of the court, for whom he prescribed more exercise.⁸²

On May 19, 1906, Menilek spent the morning supervising reconstruction work on St. Raguel Church at Entotto, his old capital, which lies at a higher altitude than Addis Ababa. In the late afternoon, while strolling with Empress T'aitu, he collapsed. The agitated empress blamed the hot rays of the sun and summoned Dr. Kohanowski of the Russian legation. The emperor recovered quickly and was well enough to make the short journey back to Addis Ababa in the care of Dr. Vitalien, who was later called. Menilek had Ciccodicola informed on May 22 that his attack must be kept a secret to avoid internal disorders.⁸³

The French minister, Leonce Lagarde, recalled at this time that only a few weeks before, Menilek had stopped at his house after another visit to Entotto. His face was distorted, his lower lip sagging, and his legs a bit stiff. Lagarde had served him a concoction of champagne and Bordeaux and the emperor left feeling better.⁸⁴

The British minister, John Harrington, informed London that Menilek had suffered an "apoplectic fit" and that "any day may see him succumb to a fatal stroke." A few months later, Harrington's diagnosis was "arterial sclerosis . . . he [the emperor] might live 10 years, die at any moment, or become paralyzed." Harrington considered sudden death most likely because "contrary to the doctor's orders Menilek was indulging

in stimulants."⁸⁵

Menilek did quite well under Vitalien's regimen: mercury capsules, mercury ointment message, and iodide of potassium to assist in the excretion of the poisonous mercury. His birthday reception in August was canceled because he was unwell, and he was confined to his room for a week in September. In December 1906 there was a small crisis that was not reported in the French diplomatic notes until 1908. Dr. Vitalien recalled that he had been consulted following an "attack of ringing in the ears, moistness of eyes, but no kidney, cardiac or liver damage."⁸⁶ Vitalien showed insufficient awareness that the amount of albumin he found in a urinalysis indicated risk in proceeding with mercury and potassium, since both exacerbate kidney infection, though he did try measures to reduce the albumin and gave the emperor weaker doses of iodide of potassium.⁸⁷

A few weeks later, Menilek was responsible for a curious firearms accident; quite uncharacteristically, since he had an absolutely professional knowledge of guns. Returning to his residence after the celebration of Ethiopian Christmas (January 7, 1970), the gun he carried was fired accidentally and wounded three men in his suite. The Afanegus Nassibu was struck in the thigh. Unaware that the shot had come from the emperor's gun, his shocked retinue began searching for the culprit. Menilek shouted, "It was I," and calmed the general hysteria. Dr. Vitalien saw the casualties soon after and pronounced their wounds not serious.⁸⁸ This accident could have been caused by a neurological reflex that Menilek could not control.

Clues to irrational behavior and poor judgment are increasingly frequent in the diplomats' reports of 1907.⁸⁹ They are suggestive rather than conclusive, for Menilek also made a number of statesmanlike decisions at the same time that Empress T'aitu was alleged to be increasing her power.

The empress postponed a trip to the holy place of Debra Libanos in February. The rumor was that "a sorcerer had prophesied that if she went to Debra Libanos, some terrible fate would befall Ethiopia."⁹⁰ Sorcerers' predictions were always handy to account for changes in plans, but the poor health of either Menilek or T'aitu is also a possibility.⁹¹

France sent a special envoy on railway negotiations, Antoine Klobukowski, in March 1907. Dr. Vitalien kept him just as well informed as he had his predecessor. On Menilek's sixty-third birthday in August, the foreign guests noted that he was not looking well. Klobukowski smugly reported to the Quai d'Orsay that he wasn't as surprised as his colleagues were, since he had been kept in the picture by Dr. Vitalien.⁹² The West Indian doctor had told him that Menilek had suffered another "stroke" on or about August 14.

The emperor was becoming discouraged about his health,

considering all the expertise that had been available to him and all the medicine that had been poured into him. In September 1907 he asked Dr. Vitalien to give him a complete explanation of his illness.⁹³ Dr. Vitalien acquired a sheep's kidney, on which he simulated an effect with chemicals that Menilek could look at with a magnifying glass. Vitalien described the long-term effects of venereal disease and of the ravages of alcohol. Menilek, he reported, was rapt, and ordered him to repeat the demonstration to his entourage. Earlier in the year Vitalien had treated Empress T'aitu's brother, Ras Welē, for delirium tremens, an attack that Menilek had actually witnessed.⁹⁴ The doctor thus had a perfect case history for the alcoholic part of his lecture.

Vitalien became the quintessential doctor-diplomat and businessman on January 30, 1908, when Menilek awarded him authority to negotiate on behalf of Ethiopia in all matters concerning the continuation of the Franco-Ethiopian railway, construction of which had ground to a halt upon completion of the Jibuti-Dire Dawa section in 1902. For the French, this development was a great coup, and the French envoy wrote to Paris that Vitalien should be awarded the Legion of Honor for his services to France. The envoy commented that, while ministering to Menilek, Vitalien had "saved France thousands of francs at the expense of his reputation." In truth, Vitalien had become unpopular. Court officials alleged that "Dr. Vitalien has sold Ethiopia to France."⁹⁵ The doctor had negotiated a greater amount of construction money to be contributed by Ethiopia and a larger proportion of the freight revenues to go to France.

Menilek continued in reasonable health for four months. In early April 1908, Vitalien informed Charles Brice, the new French Minister, that he had found the emperor depressed and his heart irregular as the result of his chronic nephritis.⁹⁶ But as there were no edema or respiratory difficulties he felt his patient was not in immediate danger. Menilek was a poor patient and had to be chided again and again about his consumption of peppery food and alcoholic drinks.

A month later, on the 11th of May, Dr. Vitalien was called up to Entotto by Empress T'aitu. He found Menilek supine, his mouth askew. In a short while the emperor was able to get up and walk, but he dragged his right leg. "Cerebral hemorrhage," diagnosed Vitalien. The empress "was very anxious and concerned," and just as she had done in 1906, said his collapse was due to walking in the hot sun after his midday meal. Vitalien bled Menilek and the patient rested at Entotto for a month. Blood-letting remained an acceptable medical practice into the 1930s. It was useless but not harmful, except in the sense of weakening the patient.

After Menilek's return to the capital on the back of a mule (he refused a litter on the grounds that it would cause anxiety to the people), he neither held audiences nor conducted any business. The empress was with him constantly. Only personal

servants and Dr. Vitalien were allowed in his presence. "It is for this privilege that the function of doctor to the emperor is sought after in this country," wrote the French Minister.⁹⁷

The complacency of Dr. Vitalien and the French legation was shattered in early June 1908. The head of an Ethiopian mission to Germany had stopped off in Constantinople (on negotiations regarding Ethiopian property in Jerusalem) and hired a new doctor for the emperor. Vitalien rushed to the palace and demanded an explanation from Menilek, who obliged:

I shouldn't have just one doctor; you have said so yourself many times. Remember, last week you were ill yourself. Two months ago I urged you to find a colleague and even advanced money for his travel. No one has come yet. So I have asked for a doctor in Turkey, where they ask for less money. But you will always be number one -- my first doctor and friend. The new one will serve under you.⁹⁸

Vitalien did not like this proposal at all. He brazened it out and said that he had already requested another physician from the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris and that the new man was at that moment on his way. Menilek answered that it didn't matter; there was plenty of work for doctors in Ethiopia. The legation then sent an urgent telegram to Paris demanding the doctor.

As though to compensate Vitalien for the offense to his amour propre, Menilek invited him to attend a meeting of the new cabinet and asked his advice on the appointment of a "first minister." Vitalien had not learned a basic lesson of diplomatic prudence -- never commit yourself. He answered promptly: "Fitwari Hapte Giyorgis would be a better first minister than Aleka Guèbrè Sellassié." This kind of remark was bound to make its way to the Aleka almost immediately. Vitalien's inept diplomacy did not stop there. When Menilek asked what was done in European monarchies when the heir to the throne was a minor, Vitalien said that a council of regents was appointed. He then recommended a number of names to Menilek for such a council; thus all those men of importance who had not been named became his enemies.⁹⁹

Soon after, black magic was directed at Menilek. On August 2, 1908, a cat with its eyes slit, its hindquarters broken, its tail cut, and a sachet of poison tied around its neck was secreted under Menilek's throne. Menilek, progressive though he was, was not free of superstition and -- vulnerable because of his poor health -- he was unnerved. Some culprits were trapped and whipped but refused to name the power behind them. The court, in turn, was afraid to condemn them for fear the sorcerer would "get" them. The accused were freed. Menilek accepted the court's decision, commenting, "Those miserable wretches -- they want me to die without thinking of the disasters that would befall my people on my death."¹⁰⁰

Menilek's speech was now slurred and hesitant and he used two canes to get about. He was in a mood to try anything or anybody who could give him hope. Dr. Mousali Bey, "a Syrian (or Egyptian) with a New York degree," was admitted to the palace about the 10th of August 1908, with a black box containing a Faraday electric machine.¹⁰¹ He assured Menilek he would cure him in a few weeks. Vitalien was furious, but Menilek was eager to try the treatment. Vitalien hurried to the French legation and told the minister that this treatment would be perilous for the sick man, and Empress T'aitu was so informed. She thanked the Frenchman and tried to dissuade Menilek, but he refused to listen to anyone.¹⁰² Faraday electric shock therapy for almost every conceivable ailment was accepted practice in Europe at this time.¹⁰³

Dr. Mousali Bey applied electric current to the emperor's paralyzed left side for the first time on August 14 and four times thereafter. Menilek's birthday occurred in the middle of these treatments, and he invited the foreign representatives to his private apartments. The French Minister, Brice, and his English colleague, Harrington, thought that Menilek had changed. The Frenchman wrote, "I found him very thin and his eyes dull. But his presence of mind was quite intact and he asked cogent questions about the process of railway negotiations." Harrington whispered to Brice (and the whisper went straight to Paris), "Do you notice his frightful color -- a sign of exhaustion -- precursor of death among people of his race."¹⁰⁴

Dr. Mousali Bey had continued Menilek's mercury ointment massage but had added belladonna to the pomade. Dr. Vitalien, fuming in the pharmacy while the new doctor controlled the royal patient, believed that the addition of the belladonna was a risky imposition on the kidneys.

The French doctor's medical opinion was backed up when l'Herminier, the junior doctor requested from Paris, arrived on August 19, 1908. Dr. l'Herminier "is young, perfectly educated with gentle manners, likes his work and will render us great service. His family and Vitalien's have known each other for a long time, so good rapport between chief (Vitalien) and subordinate (l'Herminier) is assured," wrote the French Minister.¹⁰⁵

On August 24th, after an electric treatment, Menilek collapsed. He was carried to his room and remained incommunicado for three days. Dignitaries flocked to the palace and speculated day and night. No one was admitted to Menilek's room -- not even a doctor. On the evening of August 28, Empress T'aitu called Drs. Vitalien, l'Herminier, and Wakeman and asked them to confer with Dr. Mousali Bey. Dr. Vitalien turned in a full report of the conference and Minister Brice boasted happily to Paris, "The French medical corps has won the day. We owe this honor to science and the obstinacy of Drs. Vitalien and l'Herminier . . . they have contributed greatly to keeping high our influence -- so recently threatened."¹⁰⁶

At the conference, Dr. Mousali Bey was rigorously interrogated by the two hostile French doctors. Dr. Wakeman was the only one with any sympathy for him. Dr. Mousali Bey admitted he hadn't known exactly how much current he was applying nor did he appear to be master of his equipment. He had been forced to get an electrician from the post office to get it working. "Had he measured arterial tension with a sphygmomanometer? Had he compared sphygmomanometer traces to respiratory factors, as established in the researches of Professors Pachon and l'Herminier in Paris?"

No, Dr. Mousali Bey had done neither, since he had no such equipment. He had given Menilek about ten injections of calcodylate of strychnine as a heart stimulant, along with steam baths. The patient had also been ill with influenza, coughing and spitting during the night, and Mousali explained he had been dry-cupping and "scarifying" him. "He is better now," Mousali asserted, and "His Majesty attributes his present improved state to the effects of the electric current." It was quite true that Menilek enjoyed the mild electric shock.¹⁰⁷

The four doctors then proceeded to the sick room, but Menilek wanted to see only one at a time. Dr. l'Herminier insisted that ethically he could see the emperor only in the presence of his "official" physician, who for the past three weeks had been Dr. Mousali Bey. After Menilek had undergone amiably the minute scrutiny of the two French doctors (Wakeman opted out, simply accepting l'Herminier's findings after putting an ear to Menilek's chest), they convened again.

"Abandon electric treatment!" pronounced l'Herminier. The English doctor did not agree. He felt it might be useful as soon as Menilek's influenza abated. Both French doctors sincerely believed Mousali Bey was a quack and would be harmful to Menilek. They were both intent on getting rid of him and his machine.

They discussed the strychnine injections; Wakeman was the only one who favored them. Drs. l'Herminier and Vitalien agreed on continuation of mercury with iodide of potassium; Wakeman disagreed. He opposed all mercury treatments in the African climate, having seen too many die from it, but he favored the potassium iodide, if given more frequently in smaller doses.

To combat Menilek's gastro-intestinal troubles they recommended abdominal massage, a hypogastric belt, and "douches ascendantes." Again Wakeman disagreed.¹⁰⁸ In the end he signed the report, but firmly declined to have any part in the treatment. Mousali Bey did not sign. He nodded his assent, but since he was in effect being called a bad doctor, he was justifiably bitter.

The summary diagnosis, though embroidered, had not changed much from Vitalien's 1904 analysis: "Endarterité cerebrale oblitérante spécifique et syphilisme tertiaire avec rénales manifestations. . . ." Right on the mark. They recognized that

it was incurable: "We can fight it with courteous weapons, we retard it, but. . . ."

The resentment of Dr. Mousali Bey was evident the next day when the two French doctors (Wakeman sent his excuses: he was "sick in bed with fever") were summoned by General Abata and Finance Minister Mulugeta. The two Ethiopians probed the report with questions prompted by Dr. Mousali Bey who sat there stolidly facing Vitalien and l'Herminier. Vitalien shouted, "Go immediately to His Majesty and ask him which doctor he wants -- me or Mousali Bey." The two court officials went to Menilek and came back with the message that the emperor wanted Vitalien. Abata thanked Dr. Mousali Bey, said it was a pity his system hadn't worked, and invited him to leave. His machine was smashed after Empress T'aitu had seen a demonstration of its sparking wires. "He must have wanted to kill him," she said.¹⁰⁹

Menilek was happily dependent on Dr. Vitalien within the week: "Don't let me die . . . I have so much to do before dying." He showed himself to his people on September 11, 1908, the New Year's Day of the Ethiopian calendar, and held a diplomatic reception on the 20th. His improvement was marked.¹¹⁰

At the reception the French Minister, preening himself on the success of "his" doctors, remarked to Harrington that Menilek's presence was a testimony to English and French medicine. Since Dr. Wakeman, the English doctor, had disagreed with the treatment proposed by the French doctors, Harrington may have felt patronized, and did not respond. After this snub, Minister Brice walked over to congratulate Vitalien and l'Herminier. "Menilek will be doing the empire's business full-time within six weeks," they predicted.

They were wrong. Menilek was gravely ill a week later. Again, the palace grounds swarmed with provincial governors, officials, soldiers. And still another doctor arrived. It was Dr. Paul Mérab, hired in Constantinople the year before. Vitalien, greatly upset when Menilek received Dr. Mérab three days after his arrival, immediately asked to be relieved and allowed to return to France to work on railway business as Menilek's representative. Permission was granted.

Dr. Mérab wrote that Menilek was a little haggard and "staring" but not unusually so considering his recent attack. "He took the physical exam as an amusing experience and laughed with his whole being when I asked him to say AHHHH."¹¹¹ A physical examination was no novelty to Menilek; he was probably chuckling at the repetitiveness of doctors. Neither Mérab nor the French archives specify how often Dr. Mérab saw Menilek, or indeed whether he saw him at all after his first week in Addis Ababa, except once at Debra Libanos in January 1909. He was placed in charge of the pharmacy when Dr. Vitalien left for Paris on September 30.

One thing is clear. Mérab hated Vitalien and l'Herminier. He refers to the West Indian in his books as having a "soul . . . as black as his skin." Vitalien persecuted him and undercut his appointment, Mérab said. Mérab defended Dr. Mousali Bey (who was still in the capital when he arrived on September 28, 1908), saying that the "black hand" (Vitalien) had turned into a "black tongue" which accused this "excellent colleague" of wishing to electrocute the emperor: "In reality, he could have cured him."¹¹²

Mérab's relations with Dr. l'Herminier could not have been worse. He called him the "tillik hakim" (big doctor) or the "indo-chinois" who was "so fancied-up in fine clothes he looked like a jockey." As for his surgical skills, he wielded a "butcher's knife." Seven months after Mérab's arrival, l'Herminier challenged him to a duel for spreading the rumor that he was guilty of "indecent offenses." The British and French legations were forced into a rare moment of collaboration. They joined to smooth things over, persuading the two doctors that it was not dignified for two Europeans to be engaged in a public quarrel.¹¹³

One cannot help feeling a little sorry for Dr. Mérab. He had closed his practice in Constantinople, had had cards engraved (Dr. Mérab, de la Faculté de Paris, Médecin de Sa Majesté Imperiale, Le Negus Menelick") and was out of a job virtually on arrival. In its hostility to the independent Mérab, the French legation refused him a grant to study the medicinal effects of herbs in Ethiopia, and he in turn, though a French citizen by adoption, called the French doctors "termites of French influence . . . more politicians and intriguers than diplomats, more diplomats than doctors and patriots -- and egotists above all."¹¹⁴

Dr. l'Herminier advised a trip for the emperor in November 1908 to get him away from the importuners at court.¹¹⁵ This contradicts the repeated view that Menilek was pressured by the empress and by several priests into making a religious pilgrimage. The sojourn, however, turned into the opposite of what Dr. l'Herminier had in mind. The move to Debra Libanos saw not only Dr. l'Herminier accompanying Menilek but a retinue of some 8000 persons. The arduous journey began on December 2. The first night Menilek sent back a message to Minister Brice that he was cold and would the Minister please send some gloves. The next night he asked for blankets, and Brice sent them, along with cakes and champagne.¹¹⁶

On January 19, 1909, l'Herminier sent a message from Debra Libanos saying that "something" had happened, since he had not been allowed to see his patient for five days. It was all the more disturbing to the doctor as Menilek had told him, "You are my master as I am master of the empire."¹¹⁷ The priests and the empress had persuaded Menilek to try the miraculous but icy waters of Debra Libanos. When l'Herminier was finally admitted to Menilek's tent, the emperor had suffered so much from the cold that he begged Dr. l'Herminier to forbid the ablutions: "They are

killing me . . . if you don't take me out of their hands, I will be gone. . . ."¹¹⁸

Perhaps because he did not dare to face the empress personally, or perhaps to make his recommendations more official, l'Herminier wrote her a note saying that her august husband must have medical care only, the immersions must stop, and the emperor must return to Addis Ababa.¹¹⁹

Despite their mutual hostility, Dr. l'Herminier sent a message to Dr. Mérab to come to Debra Libanos to assist in an operation on an Ethiopian officer. In his book Mérab makes it appear that he had received an urgent summons from the emperor. In any event he saw Menilek only once, in the presence of the empress.

"His Majesty must be kept warm," said Mérab.

"What?" she bristled.

Mérab repeated his orders and stamped out, striking his solar topee against his knee for emphasis. The empress stopped him with a calmer voice but a baleful expression: "We people are more accustomed to the cold than you are."¹²⁰ Mérab returned to Addis Ababa on January 27.

Then on February 3, a new-old doctor entered the medical drama. The Ethiopian physician, Charles Martin, had been re-assigned as temporary replacement for Dr. Wakeman at the British legation. Despite her testy comments about Martin's salary eight years earlier, Empress T'aitu summoned him post-haste to Debra Libanos. By the time Dr. Martin had tidied up some victims of an explosion in Addis Ababa, the order was canceled. The emperor was returning to the capital.¹²¹

Menilek returned part of the way by car, on a road especially built for this new mechanical import to Ethiopia. However, to reassure the cheering populace that lined the road into the city, he was propped on the back of a mule for the last few miles -- "like some aging coquette," observed the French Minister.¹²²

Chefneux, a long-time adviser to Menilek but out of favor at this time, wrote his former associate Alfred Ilg that the emperor had come back from Debra Libanos no better than when he went.¹²³ An Ethiopian "close to the court" told the French Minister at the same time that "Menilek is no longer capable of forming a sane opinion . . . he can no longer govern."¹²⁴

The Italian Minister, Count Colli, visited Menilek on March 6 and reported that the emperor looked better but that his mental faculties were impaired.¹²⁵ Suddenly, on March 10, no one was allowed to enter the palace grounds without the express authority of the empress. Menilek (or those acting for him)

recognized his diminished capacity in a statement read to the assembled chiefs of Tigre and Gojjam by Hayle Giyorgis on March 20, 1909, saying that his health would not permit him to continue working for the progress of Ethiopia. Thus he had empowered a cabinet "like the Europeans have" and named as his heir Lij Yasu, his 14-year-old grandson, son of his daughter Shewa Regga and Ras Mikael.¹²⁶

THE EMPRESS TAKES CHARGE

Empress T'aitu's de facto rule developed gradually. She had been an influence to be reckoned with since her marriage to Menilek in 1883. Clearly, with the emperor so frequently immobilized, the everyday conduct of business brought to the palace had to be handled by the empress. Hapte Giyorgis, Hayle Giyorgis, and Tessema Nado, Menilek's most important advisers, were themselves often ill. As the foreigners saw the situation, the empress ruled by doing nothing, or rather, by doing nothing that they wanted done. Menilek was far from non compos mentis. He was just too debilitated to concentrate, and often merely nodded in approval or disapproval of the decisions of others.

The emperor could still surprise people, however. An Austrian explorer had an audience with him in March 1909. "Menilek instantly recognized me after four years! He was interested in my gift of a portable telephone and a map of Kaffa where I had traveled in 1905." He also asked about Franz Joseph and the method of succession to the Austrian throne.¹²⁷

Menilek was decisive enough to change doctors, undoubtedly with T'aitu's encouragement. In April 1909, the emperor informed Dr. l'Herminier that he had asked the German emperor to send him a doctor and this doctor had just arrived. Of course he would see him only in l'Herminier's presence.¹²⁸

EXIT FRANCE, ENTER GERMANY: APRIL-JULY 1909

The Germans seemed not to realize that their medical diplomacy was too late. Dr. M. Steinkuhler actually believed in a miraculous cure, with benefits accruing to German interests that were primarily commercial. He and l'Herminier conferred agreeably enough, according to the latter's report. "We shall abstract ourselves from our respective nationalities . . . each of us remaining a good Frenchman and a good German, with the interests of our patient at heart." Menilek claimed immediate examination, so all day every day, for four days, they carefully examined the emperor, who wanted a diagnosis.

The diagnosis had not changed since 1904 -- cerebral syphilis of the vascular type, with a chronic kidney infection. Had Menilek's latent infection been in the cortex, rather than in the meninges or the blood vessels, the degeneration of his mental

faculties would have been more noticeable. Dr. Steinkuhler informed the principal intendant of the emperor, Bejirond Mulugeta, that he and Dr. l'Herminier were in complete agreement, except for a new German method of iodide treatment. l'Herminier pointed out Menilek's vulnerability to iodides, but "judged it proper to accede to his wish."¹²⁹

Steinkuhler then cheered the emperor by telling him he was not so badly off as originally thought. At this juncture, l'Herminier demurred. He and Vitalien believed that only an improvement was in prospect, not a cure. They hoped to maintain those cerebral faculties so indispensable to running the empire, and that was all. Despite strong cautionary advice from l'Herminier on two occasions against using electric stimulus on the royal invalid, Steinkuhler persisted. France and Germany divided -- their joint treatment of Menilek was at an end.

The emperor's two personal aides, Mulugeta and Meteferia, had opposed the electrical therapy and claimed that such treatment weakened Menilek. When Steinkuhler found that in the course of treatment the current had been altered to generate a dangerous 190 volts (instead of the usual 140-150), he was convinced that there had been malicious tampering with the apparatus by one of these men.

After administering an electric treatment in mid-May, Steinkuhler observed that Menilek was more depressed and nervous than usual. His eyelids drooped, his pulse was faint and irregular, and his body movements were labored. All are symptoms of cerebral vascular thrombosis, but Steinkuhler was convinced that his patient had been poisoned!

The doctor promptly asked Mulugeta for a specimen of Menilek's urine and all the food left from his last meal. His suspicions only increased when he was told the food had already been thrown out, though he was provided a urine sample. In twenty-four hours, Steinkuhler's conclusions were delivered to the German legation: "The emperor is being systematically poisoned with cyanide of potassium."¹³⁰

The German doctor not only failed at medical diplomacy, he failed at medical detection. Steinkuhler failed to have his tests verified by another doctor immediately; he did not investigate whether the imperial food taster had suffered any effects of food poisoning; moreover, he informed the German legation when his employer was the Ethiopian government; he should rather have gone to Ras Tessema, titular head of government.

Steinkuhler's other failures lay in his arrogance and lack of tact. For instance, he commanded that special care be taken to see that the utensils used for Menilek's food were clean. However, this insult to the housekeeping of the empress was allowed to pass for the moment and Dr. Steinkuhler continued to care for Menilek for three more weeks.

Had the Germans deliberately wished to embroil the Ethiopian court in argument and dissension, they could not have chosen a more fertile medium. No one ever seemed to die of natural causes in Ethiopia. It was always said, "He was poisoned." Empress T'aitu was consistently accused whenever one of her enemies died.¹³¹

On the 19th of June, the emperor told the German doctor that he wished to take communion. Dr. Steinkuhler was very angry and warned Menilek of dire consequences to his health, but he was politely ushered out.

Three weeks later, still not having submitted any evidence to Ras Tessema, to Empress T'aitu, or to Hayle Giyorgis, the Germans (the legation supported Dr. Steinkuhler) demanded that Bejirond Mulugeta and Azaj Meteferia be arrested, interrogated, and punished for the crime of lèse-majesté. "If these two men are not arrested, we will tell the whole world."¹³² Menilek sent a formal note to the German legation stating that Dr. Steinkuhler was no longer welcome at his court.

On July 27, on the advice of Dr. Martin, who had been acting as the royal doctor since July 10, Empress T'aitu ordered an official inquiry. The doctors in Addis Ababa assembled (except the Italians, whose three doctors -- Megri, de Castro, and Brielli -- had reviewed the German laboratory report and found it unconvincing) to interrogate Mulugeta and Meteferia in the presence of the Abun (head of the church) and various court officials. They waited four hours for A. Zintgraff, a German foreign affairs adviser at court, and for Dr. Steinkuhler, but neither showed up. Their explanation came eventually: since the inquiry was not a properly convened judicial procedure, it would look as though the Germans were on trial.

One week later the German Minister sent to all the legations a memo giving the Steinkuhler version of the entire episode to date. Then Ras Tessema, for the government, circularized the various legations, countering the German version. He emphasized the insulting and thoughtless behavior of Steinkuhler and Zintgraff in demanding a judgment on two men who had given many years of loyal service to the crown. In addition, the Germans by their action had defamed Empress T'aitu.

The reputation of the empress had been under attack for some months. Both Ethiopians and foreigners thought she had been taking advantage of Menilek's ill health by making political decisions in his name, and indeed she had been. But the gross accusations of the Germans had caused even her enemies in the court to close ranks with her adherents against these ferenji (foreigners). The empress had no reason to dispose of her husband; his presence was the one guarantee of her continuing power and position.

She played her cards cleverly, and in a letter to Ras

Tessema offered to confide the care of the emperor to whomever the government wanted to trust. She was prepared to go away, but vehemently protested the accusation of poisoning or obstruction of medical care. She absolved Mulugeta and Meteferia of all responsibility, since everything had been under her personal surveillance. Ras Tessema, in the name of all chiefs, professed continued devotion to and trust in T'aitu and begged her to continue her loving care of the emperor.¹³³ Because of such poor diplomacy on the part of the Germans, doctors and diplomats together, an Ethiopian conspiracy to depose the empress was pushed back about nine months.

A second inquiry was held on August 18. Dr. Steinkuhler attended, but rose to leave when he discovered that only doctors were there and no Ethiopian officials. They were "all very brusque to him, especially Dr. Vitalien, a colored physician . . . political agent for France."¹³⁴ Dr. Martin rushed out and persuaded three nobles -- Mengesha-Atikim, Gugsä Welē and Hayle Giyorgis -- to return with him to the meeting. Dr. Steinkuhler finally agreed to send his laboratory report to the government, though the doctors who had seen it had agreed that its evidence was flimsy.¹³⁵

At his birthday reception the next day, Menilek smilingly greeted everyone and looked stronger than he had for months. The Italian Minister told the American Minister that he had quite disapproved of the Germans' behavior, and the British Minister could hardly conceal his delight that the Germans were out of favor and "his" Doctor Martin was in.¹³⁶

The question must now be asked: could there have been any basis for Dr. Steinkuhler's allegations? Expert opinion thinks not.¹³⁷ Steinkuhler correctly used picric and muriatic acid to detect cyanide of potassium. But the same tests would give the same results in most healthy urine specimens. Potassium is naturally present, but this was not known in 1910. Menilek had more than the usual proportion, since he had been taking potassium salts along with his mercury treatments.¹³⁸

Cyanide of potassium is a quick killer. It has the distinctive odor of almonds and an amount the size of a pea would kill a sturdy person in less than an hour. The symptoms that alerted Steinkuhler had been seen many times in Menilek after a "stroke." If Dr. Steinkuhler had discussed his findings with Dr. l'Herminier, he might not have made such precipitate accusations. It could be argued that the German doctor made an assumption of poisoning rather than face the fact that the electricity treatments he had carried out over everyone's opposition had preceded an evidently negative change in the emperor's health.

The poisoned-emperor caper was officially concluded by the publication in November 1909 of a pamphlet, ordered published in French and Amharic by Empress T'aitu. It was mailed to

European newspapers and to the foreign legations, as well as to the governors of provinces in Ethiopia, and may be considered Ethiopia's first essay into international public relations. The tone was sarcastic: "The poison lay in those misunderstandings over salary and housing between the accusers and the accused." It contrasted the "demand and threat" behavior of the German doctor to that of the Russians, "who were truly like brothers," and of the French, who "lived in perfect accord with us."¹³⁹

THE ETHIOPIAN DOCTOR

Menilek was making a remarkable comeback under Dr. Martin's care. The doctor had first examined the emperor with Dr. Steinkuhler on July 24. They found his heart strong, his pulse too "full," his speech thick, and his hearing dull. Otherwise their patient was in good condition. The cooperation between Drs. Martin and Steinkuhler lasted three days, until the aborted medical conference of July 27. Dr. Martin acted alone until December 22, 1909, officially on loan to the Ethiopian government and paid by them. His seconding to the Ethiopians had been approved "in view of the state of His Majesty's health and for political reasons."¹⁴⁰

Dr. Martin had many arguments with the empress over Menilek's diet. The favorite home remedy in Ethiopia was a mixture of honey and clarified butter. The doctor begged Menilek not to take this because it caused congestion. Martin was up against the philosophy that a sick person should be given all he asks for and as much as he wants.¹⁴¹

The French alleged that the palace was still shopping for a doctor in early October by delegating a Greek to sound out the Czar of Bulgaria. The Russian legation had been asked for its doctor, but his services were refused, except as a consultant.¹⁴²

On October 27, 1909, Menilek had his most damaging and irreparable "stroke," and became completely paralyzed on his right side as well as his left, and lost the power of speech. Dr. Martin was not so possessive about his royal patient as his predecessors had been, and called in Dr. Vitalien and Dr. Kohanowski. Menilek was given digitalis, strychnine, enemas, massages, diuretics, and blood coagulants. Ras Tessema was proclaimed regent for the heir, Lij Yasu, on October 29; he was warned to expect the worst.¹⁴³ A proclamation was issued in Menilek's name on November 1; it urged his people to support the heir, Lij Yasu, and on November 26 the head of the church followed this up with the caution that he who did not give complete loyalty to the sovereign's choice would be excommunicated.

Astonishingly, the immediate danger to Menilek receded. He was soon sitting on the side of his bed and taking nourishment. He understood what was said to him and nodded or grunted in response. At the end of November he had another mild "seizure."

The date is indefinite because Dr. Martin was seeing Menilek only when the empress called him. Dr. Mérab, who by then was making a living in private practice and had opened a pharmacy, states positively that a last attack on November 29, 1909, at five o'clock in the afternoon, resulted in Menilek's death. Mérab was obsessed with this conviction, and though he lived in Addis Ababa for another four years, was never persuaded otherwise. He insisted that Menilek was impersonated by a "double" during those years, but he was mistaken.¹⁴⁴ Menilek died on December 12, 1913.

CONCLUSION

Menilek was not completely incompetent until October 27, 1910, but he was not in control of his empire after his "stroke" on August 17, 1908, when he suffered general paralysis. At age 64, Menilek had been exhausted by four severe cerebral vascular events and two minor ones by that date. Although he had the capacity for amazing physical recuperation -- sitting through hours of receptions, riding about town in a carriage or car, receiving visitors -- the sharp, astute Menilek was no longer in evidence.

It was not just because of poor decisions and lack of judgment by those who governed for him (Empress T'aitu, Ras Tessema, and Hayle Giyorgis, among others) that the business of the empire came to a standstill. Menilek took five years to die. This fact paralyzed government: absolute monarchies require absolute monarchs. The naming of a minor as heir, together with a regent and an inexperienced cabinet, encouraged the development of factions and confused the lines of command.

That Menilek lingered on was, in an odd way, related to Empress T'aitu's cancellation of all medical care after December 1909. Mercury capsules -- a poisonous substance used anywhere in the world, but at the time the only accepted treatment for syphilis -- were stopped. Had they been continued, they might have quickened his demise.

As for medical diplomacy, no nation was to collect the honor and credit for curing Menilek; he was incurable long before they reached him. The national rivalries played out over Menilek's body probably did not harm him, despite Dr. Mérab's claim that this "scourge of political doctors" mistreated the royal invalid. Menilek could not have been cured even by Dr. Ehrlich's magic bullet (1910). Nor could the later discovery of penicillin have reversed the atrophy of his nervous system.

It is clear that no nation made a specially assiduous effort to find the best qualified specialist. Medical diplomacy was a hit or miss proposition, each nation using whatever doctor appeared on the scene or could be persuaded to go to Ethiopia. The only diplomatic advantage achieved by France was a certain edge in the competition for information in this very closed society, but other legations acquired more or less the same

information from less privileged sources. The Italian doctors were unable to prevent Menilek from seeing what was in Ethiopia's best interest, despite their excellent services to him. In the end, medical diplomacy benefited mainly the Ethiopian people, through the establishment of hospitals and clinics and the development of modern medicine in Ethiopia.

NOTES

Abbreviations:

PRO, FO - Public Records Office, London, Foreign Office
ASMAI - Archivio Storico dell'ex-Ministero Africa Italiana
LV, XV - Libro Verde, Atti parlamenti, Documenti Diplomatici,
Rome
MAE, NS Eth. - Ministère Affaires Etrangères, Nouvelle Serie
Ethiopie, politiques intérieures, Paris

1. For proposals on modern medical diplomacy, still pragmatic but more enlightened, see H. Berry, "Medicine and U.S. Foreign Policy: A Partnership for the Seventies," Military Medicine 137 (January 1972).
2. S. Strelcyn, in "Les médecines du Bégamder et du Tchelgas (Ethiopie) d'Abbaba Garrad," Africana Bulletin (Warsaw) 5 (1966):53, notes a strong Arabic influence on Ethiopian medical practices.
3. P. Mérab, Médecins et médecines en Ethiopie (Paris, 1912), p. 216; R. Pankhurst, "The Beginnings of Modern Medicine in Ethiopia," Ethiopia Observer 9 (1965):2, 114-160. The Washington Post of September 19, 1977 reported that President Barre of Somalia sent his American physician and adviser to confer with the American State Department concerning military aid for Somalia.
4. P. Mérab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, 3 vols. (Paris, 1921, 1922, 1929), vol. 2, p. 190.
5. Dr. Thomas Strickland, conversation with the author, May 12, 1976.
6. This is an estimated figure, since the only statistics available are for 1965-70 in the United Nations Demographic Yearbook (New York, 1974).
7. The general public had no such fear. Almost any white man was considered a "doctor" and was asked for treatment by a trusting populace.
8. Menilek's grandfather, Sahle Sellassié, was aware of disease communicability, for he told Surgeon Kirk of the 1843 Harris Expedition, "We princes also fear the smallpox and therefore never tarry long in one place." C. Harris, The Highlands of Ethiopia, 2 vols. (London, 1844), vol. 2, p. 161.
9. There are training academies for hakims, with stringent requirements such as not marrying while doing their studies. In addition to Mérab's books (notes 3 and 4), see Tsehai Berhane Selassie, "An Ethiopian Medical Textbook," Journal of Ethiopian Studies 9 (January 1971); S. Strelcyn, "Les

traites medicaux Ethiopien," Cahiers d'Etudes Ethiopiens 2 (1962); R. Cacciapuoti, "Medicina e farmacologia indigena Etiopia," Rassegna di Studi Etiopici 1 (1941); R. Pankhurst, "An Historical Examination of Traditional Ethiopian Medicine," Ethiopian Medical Journal 3 (July 1965).

10. Mérab, Medecins, p. 38.
11. R. Wurtz, "Hygiène publique et privée en Abyssinie," La semaine médicale (Paris, December 7, 1898).
12. J. Borelli, Ethiopie méridionale (Paris, 1890), p. 248.
13. C. Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich (Torino, 1936), p. 272.
14. Menilek had a drum beaten when he took kosso so no one would attempt to come to his court for business (A. Cecchi, Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa, 3 vols. [Florence, 1885, 1886, 1887] 1, p. 297). In Dr. Wurtz's opinion kosso was a poor antiparasitic because it had to be used so often. Nevertheless, it was introduced into European pharmacology and is stocked, in diluted form, in French pharmacies today.
15. Drs. l'Herminier and Vitalien, Addis Ababa, September 1908, enclosed in Brice/Pichon, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., September 8,, 1908. Vitalien suspected syphilis as the cause in 1904, but Menilek confirmed it only in 1906.
16. Dr. R. Willcox, Consultant Venerologist, Praed Street Clinic, St. Mary's Hospital, London, October 1973, amended the Vitalien-l'Herminier term "hemorrhage" to the more appropriate "thrombosis."
17. C. Dennie, A History of Syphilis (New York, 1969); Encyclopaedia Britannica (New York, 1911) 27, "Venereal Disease."
18. G. Massaia, I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'Alta Etiopia, 12 vols. (Rome, 1929) 11, pp. 64-68. Massaia's way of describing Menilek's morals was to say he was a "slave of passion." Massaia disliked Bafana heartily and never considered her anything but a concubine of Menilek's. The Encyclopedia Italiana (1929) and La Grande Encyclopédie (Paris, 1896-1902) term her a legitimate wife of Menilek.
19. Massaia, I miei trentacinque 9, p. 48.
20. Zewde Gabre Sellassie (interview, January 1972) gave me the name of Zauditu's mother. The age of the child that Massaia attended in 1878 does not tally with the official birthdate of Zauditu, 1876. Belaynish Michael, in a letter to the author (Addis Ababa, October 1, 1974), gave the mother's name as "Abitchou," but I believe that that was the tribe or area she came from.

21. Massaia, I miei trentacinque 9, pp. 132-133. None of the doctors who came found fortunes in Ethiopia; in fact, they had a difficult time getting paid anything at all. Wurtz in 1898 (see note 11) said that he met only one doctor in Ethiopia who was getting paid for his services.
22. Borelli, Ethiopie, p. 330. The son was Asfa Wasen, who died in 1888.
23. L. Louis Lande, "Un voyageur français dans l'Ethiopie méridionale," Revue des revues des deux mondes, 3rd ser., 30 (1878):877-903; 31 (1879):375-412.
24. Cecchi, Da Zeila 1, p. 272; 2, p. 588.
25. Massaia, I miei trentacinque 10, p. 22.
26. Letter dictated by Antinori, Let Marefia, April 16, 1882; Bolletino Società Geografica Italiana 19 (November 1882):835.
27. A. Franzoj, Continente nero (Novara, 1961), p. 123.
28. Antonelli, Entotto, May 23, 1883 and February 1885. LV, XV (1890).
29. Antonelli, Borumeda, June 27, 1884. LV, XV (1890).
30. L. Traversi, "Il Dottore Raffaele Alfieri," Rivista delle Colonie Italiane, 9 (1935):664.
31. Antonelli, February 1885, LV, XV (1890). Alfieri was repatriated to Italy in 1888 and was encouraged to absent himself from Rome, where "his presence would be a hindrance to our present actions in Shewa." Traversi, "Alfieri," 665.
32. Traversi, "Alfieri," 664. In L. Traversi, Let Marefia (Milan, 1931), p. 261, he makes it clear he thought Ragazzi neglected his administrative duties in favor of attending the king.
33. A. d'Aubry, "Rapport sur une mission au Royaume de Choa," Extrait du Bulletin de la Société de Géographie (Paris, 1887): 471.
34. P. Soleillet, Une exploration commerciale en Ethiopie (Paris, 1886), diary entry of July 7, 1884.
35. d'Aubry, "Rapport," 471.
36. Father Ferdinand's diary, August 26, 1883. From a photocopy in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa.
37. Gúebrè Sellassié, Chronique du règne de Menilek, 2 vols. (Paris, 1930, 1932), edited and annotated by Maurice de

Coppet; translated into French by Tesfa Sellassié, 1, p. 192.

38. Antonelli, Entotto, April 15, 1886, LV, XV (1890).
39. N. Parisi, l'Abissinia (Milan, 1888), p. 130. Dr. Traversi accompanied Menilek and Antonelli to the meeting with Yohannes. Yohannes had good reason to be suspicious of his presence, since Traversi had been one of the Italians he had expelled from his dominions the year before.
40. MAE/Gené, May 1, 1886. ASMAI 36/4-37.
41. Traversi, writing from Finfini, November 15, 1887. Bolletino Società Geografica Italiana 25 (February 1888):126-27.
42. Zaghi, Crispi, pp. 3-5. Ragazzi had several detractors. Salimbeni (Zaghi, Crispi, p. 102) wrote that Ragazzi had left about 800 talers in debts behind, that his house was full of whores, that he had been drunk as a monkey at court. Traversi (Let Marefia, p. 286) said that "he was obsessed with his passions."
43. E. Scarfoglio, Il Mattino, June 12-13, 1893, using the pen name "Tartarin." Collected in Abissinia, 2 vols. (Milan, 1937), 1, p. 31.
44. R. Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment," ms. (1964):38, provided by the author.
45. V. F. Mashkov, "Il secondo viaggio in Abissinia del Mashcov (1891-1892)," Bolletino Società Geografica Italiana 7 (November-December 1894):841-86.
46. M. S. Wellby, 'Twixt Sirdar and Menilek (London, 1901), p. 89.
47. Mérab, Impressions, 2, p. 119; Borelli, Ethiopie, p. 155.
48. C. Annaratone, Abissinia (Rome, 1914), p. 484, quotes a report by English doctors who say arthritis and gout are uncommon in Poland, Russia, and Ireland where distilled liquors are drunk.
49. Zaghi, Crispi, p. 188. T'aitu's sterility cannot be blamed on Menilek's latent syphilis.
50. A. Salimbeni, "Diario d'un pioniere africano," Nuova Antologia, 16 (March 1936):285-86.
51. Zaghi, Crispi, p. 272.
52. Reflecting the bitter French-Italian competition over influence peddling at Menilek's court, Mondon-Vidhaillet informed readers of Le Temps (July 28, 1893) that Dr. Traversi had refused him treatment for an eye infection, and hinted at

a scandal over the suicide of a young man three days after Traversi returned to Shewa in 1893.

53. G. F. Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa (London, 1902), p. 194. Another doctor, A. Zaric, of Italo-Yugoslav descent, was summoned from Entotto by Menilek. He ended up behind Italian lines but returned to Addis Ababa with Italian prisoners of war and was repatriated with them. R. Pankhurst, "Beginnings of Modern Medicine," 124; C. Zaghi, I Russi in Etiopia, 2 vols. (Naples, 1972), 2, p. 251.
54. H. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menilek II (Oxford, 1974), p. 173.
55. Pankhurst, "Beginnings of Modern Medicine," 124-27. Zaghi, (I Russi, 2, p. 250) puts the number of wounded Ethiopians treated at 7500, which seems a more likely figure.
56. Zaghi, I Russi, 2, pp. 249-51.
57. C. Mondon-Vidhaillet dispatch to Le Temps (November 2, 1896), datelined Addis Ababa, September 2, 1896.
58. T. V. Shchusev, "Kistoham Golubogo Nila," Russkoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo Izvestiya Irgo 36 (1900):198-217.
59. E. T. Wilson, Russia and Black Africa (New York, 1974), p. 59.
60. The cancellation may have been dissembling on Menilek's part, since the expedition was to support the French push to the Nile which culminated in the "Fashoda" incident. Menilek was more interested in his own claims to this area than in those of France, but he did assign Ras Mekonnin as substitute commander.
61. Zaghi (I Russi, 2, pp. 294-300) gives a full account of Leontiev, whom he describes as "arms trafficker, speculator and ambassador."
62. R. P. Skinner, Abyssinia of Today (New York, 1906), p. 89.
63. Guébrè Sellassié, Chronique, 2, p. 454.
64. Permanent legations were established by France, England, Italy, and Russia. A mission from Turkey stayed only a week.
65. C. Michel, Vers Fachoda (Paris, 1900), p. 101; J. Rennell-Rodd, Social and Diplomatic Memories (London, 1922), p. 157.
66. J. Emily, Mission Marchand (Paris, 1913), p. 329. The other two doctors were Queveseur and de Couvalette. The same source describes a "Dr. K." who said he was Menilek's doctor and that he was of Swiss origin but a naturalized American and about to become French. He had accompanied the Leontiev exploration

party of May 1898 and thus could be Dr. Khan.

67. Wurtz, "Hygiène publique," 493.
68. Ciccodicola/di Rudini, Addis Ababa, May 25, 1900. ASMAI 38/1/10.
69. Harrington/Salisbury, Addis Ababa, March 1, 1901. PRO, FO 403/312; Pankhurst, "Beginnings of Modern Medicine," 132-33. Dr. Charles Martin was born Ethiopian, adopted by a British officer who found him at Meqdela in 1868, and was educated in India and the U.K. He added "Workneh" to his name when he resettled in his native land.
70. L. de Castro, Nella Terra di Negus, 2 vols. (Milan, 1915), 1, intro. Between 1901 and 1911 the Italians gave about 60,000 consultations; in a similar time period, 1896-1906, the Russians gave about 65,000, but the latter had more doctors.
71. Hervey/FO, Addis Ababa, December 26, 1908. PRO, FO 371/594.
72. A. Hayes, Source of the Blue Nile (London, 1905), p. 98.
73. Nerazzini/commandant at Massawa, Zeila, October 11 and 21, 1895; Baratieri to MAE, Massawa, October 23, 1895, Documenti Diplomatici, Keren, Asmara, Ethiopia. Dennie (see note 17) says that a person with latent syphilis can be struck with lightning pains in arms or legs; the pains will go away after a few doses of mercury.
74. Vitalien report, enclosure, Addis Ababa, December 4, 1904, MAE, NS. Eth., pol. int. I.
75. The newspaper clipping and the denial are found in NS Eth., pol. int. I for 1901. Kouri was the French consular official. He had left Ethiopia in July 1901. Dr. Martin had good sources at the palace throughout 1900 and up to March 1901, and would have reported any ill health of Menilek's to the British legation. Russian doctors were in Addis Ababa at the time, but Russian consular reports have not been available to me.
76. Neue Züricher Zeitung (September 10, 1903); the Ilg interview was dated September 3, 1903.
77. Clipping of July 1903, enclosed in MAE, NS Eth., pol. int. I. The identity of this doctor is a mystery. He is not listed in the history of the Greek community by A. Zervos, in l'Empire Ethiopie (Athens, 1936). Drs. Koriander and Goffin attended Menilek in 1901 and 1902, and their names are difficult to transmute into "Antomoglu."
78. Willi Loepfe, in letter to author, June 7, 1974. Dr. Loepfe

cites a British legation note in the summer of 1902: "His Majesty is very absent minded and is at present deprived of the services of his remembrancer, Mr. Ilg. . . ." Alfred Ilg und die aetheopische Eisenbahn (Zurich, 1974), pp. 108-09.

79. Dr. Vitalien also acted as tutor to Makonen's son, Tafari, who became Emperor Haile Sellassie I. P. Petridus, Le Héros d'Adoua (Paris, 1963), p. 250.
80. Vitalien, enclosure, Lagarde/Pichon, December 20, 1904, NS Eth., pol. int. I.
81. This skittishness is often a characteristic of progressive brain damage. Menilek's had become more aggravated by 1908. "Les occupations des Menilek," A travers le monde 15 (1909), describes frenetic behavior by Menilek during one interview; the source is an anonymous Italian.
82. H. Vollbrecht, Im Reiche des Negus Negesti, Menelik II (Stuttgart, 1906). Exercise therapy for treatment of women's illness was developed in Germany in 1899.
83. Ciccodicola (MAE, Addis Ababa, February 10, 1906; ASMAI 38/4/31) reports that Vitalien was out of favor because of imprudent remarks made without the emperor's authorization in Paris, and that Menilek was using the Russian doctor for the care of himself and his family. See also F. Martini, Il diario Eritreo, 4 vols. (Rome, n.d.), 4, p. 370.
84. Lagarde/Pichon, NS Eth., pol. int. I, May 21, 1905, Addis Ababa.
85. Harrington/Grey, Addis Ababa, May 27, June 1, 1905, PRO FO 371/3; October 12, 1906, FO 401/159.
86. Vitalien/l'Herminier report, Addis Ababa, September 1908, NS Eth., pol. int. II. Vitalien suspected Bright's disease, a kidney ailment with a particular correlation between excessive albumin, fever, vomiting, and distension, defined in 1827.
87. The albumin was 1 gram to the liter, a danger signal in medicine today.
88. Roux/Pichon, Addis Ababa, January 21, 1907. NS Eth., pol. int. I. Afanegus Nassibu died July 12, 1908 of pulmonary congestion caused by mercury fumigation for his syphilitic infection. Ibid., July 12, 1908.
89. Just what constitutes poor or irrational decisions is a subjective matter. Criticized by the legations were (1) disgrace of his loyal nephew Biru Meshesha Sefu over a minor marital matter; (2) promotion of Dr. Vitalien as an adviser over Chefneux, who had worked for Menilek for many years;

- (3) an argument of such violence with the empress that it became public knowledge; (4) a peremptory request to the British legation not to let Harrington return as envoy after his leave in Britain.
90. Roux/Pichon, Addis Ababa, March 6, 1907, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., I.
 91. Coincidentally, a famous Moslem prophet, Sheik Zakaryas, was in Addis Ababa between October 1906 and May 1907. D. Crumme, "Shaikh Zakaryas," Journal of Ethiopian Studies 10 (January 1972):55-66. In matters of prophecy, Christians in Ethiopia have no bias.
 92. Klobukowski/Pichon, Addis Ababa, August 20, 1907, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
 93. Klobukowski/Pichon, Addis Ababa, September 21, 1907, ibid. Vitalien gave Menilek an anatomy lecture several years before this date and afterward Menilek demonstrated his quick intelligence by repeating it the following day to one of his relatives. Lt. Collat, l'Abyssinie actuelle (Paris, 1906).
 94. Roux/Pichon, Addis Ababa, March 14, 1907, MAE, NS Eth. pol. int. II.
 95. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, September 1, 1908, ibid. Ilg, the previous concession-holder, had resigned in October 1907.
 96. His depression could also be ascribed to the death of a favorite grandson, Wasan Seged, an attractive young man of 24 whose growth was stunted. March 29, 1908, ibid.
 97. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, April 10, May 12, 1908, ibid.
 98. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, June 6, 1908, ibid. Menilek's letter to Vitalien requesting a doctor is dated April 2, 1908, NS Eth., guerre, service sanitaire.
 99. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, July 9 and 11, 1908. MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
 100. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, August 2, 1908, ibid. The cat story is also in Mérab, Impressions, 3, p. 260, with the wrong date of 1907.
 101. The French minister identified Mousali Bey as being from the medical corps of the Egyptian army, trained in New York. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, November 26, 1908, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., I. A search of the medical directories of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut for 1906-1908 gives no such name. He did come to Ethiopia at the suggestion of Hayle Giyorgis, and on the recommendation of H. Ydlibi, who frequently went to Cairo on business for the emperor.

102. Neither Menilek or T'aitu was unfamiliar with electric massage. Dr. Goffin treated T'aitu's mother with a battery-operated machine in 1902 (J. Duchesne-Fournet, Mission en Ethiopie 1901-1903 [Paris, 1909], p. 220). E. A. de Cosson, in The Cradle of the Blue Nile (London, 1877), refers to the use by Ethiopians of an insect called a "torpedo" with an electrical charge that "we use like galvanism" (p. 208).
103. E. Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud (London, 1964), pp. 187, 209, 312. The use of electrical impulse on paralyzed parts of the body is used today, but only after careful study of the overall condition of the patient.
104. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, August 19, 1908, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
105. Ibid.
106. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, September 1, 1908, ibid.
107. Dr. C. Martin's diary, courtesy of Peter Garretson.
108. Abdominal massage would have been a "rough treatment" for this patient. Comment by Dr. John Utz, Dean, Georgetown Medical School, Washington, D.C., August 20, 1977.
109. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, September 13, 1908, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
110. Ibid., September 22, 1908.
111. Mérab, Impressions, 2, p. 55.
112. Ibid., 2, p. 76.
113. Ibid., 1, pp. 201, 243-44, 351, 399; 2, pp. 42, 57, 75, 90, 131, 212-14 contains derogatory references to Vitalien and l'Herminier but does not mention them by name. The identification is obvious, since Vitalien did have a dark skin, and l'Herminier did serve in Indo-China. Hervey/Grey, Addis Ababa, July 29, 1909, FO 371/597 describes the quarrel between the two doctors.
114. Mérab, Impressions, 1, p. 100. Mérab, of Georgian birth and a naturalized Frenchman, was fiercely patriotic about France, so one wonders why he got along so badly with the "establishment." The legation may have been uncertain that he would report all the court gossip to them. Mérab's outspoken language in print suggests an excitable, difficult personality. However, he got along with the Russian and English doctors, and with a Dr. d'Antoine de Chaillas who was brought to Ethiopia by Léon Chefneux. Dr. d'Antoine termed himself a "consultant to His Majesty the Emperor" in a commercial endorsement for a French tonic, Vin Mariani, which he stated

Menilek had authorized him to give. Album Mariani (New York, 1910) was a compilation from the Paris publication for American promotion. I find no reference in the French diplomatic notes that Dr. d'Antoine had any official consultation with Menilek.

115. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, November 18, 1908. MAE, NS Eth., pol. int. II.
116. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, December 2, 1908, ibid.
117. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, November 18, 1908, ibid.
118. G. Rémond, Voyages -- La route de l'Abbaï Noir (Paris, 1924) pp. 38-39.
119. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, January 29, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int. I. Except for January 19, when l'Herminier said he hadn't seen the emperor for five days, the precise sequence of events at Debra Libanos is unclear until Menilek's return to Addis Ababa on February 13.
120. Mérab, Impressions 2, p. 52.
121. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, February 10, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int. II, and Gervy/Grey, February 10, 1909, PRO, FO 371/594. Dr. Martin arrived at the end of December 1908.
122. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, February 13, 1909, ibid.
123. Chefneux letter to Ilg, February 18, 1909, Addis Ababa. Courtesy of Richard Caulk.
124. Kantiba Wolde Tsadek/Brice, Addis Ababa, February 3, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int. II.
125. Colli/MAE, Addis Ababa, March 1909, ASMAI, 54/34/141.
126. Brice, Addis Ababa, March 23, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
127. F. J. Bieber, "Durch Südaethiopien zum Nil," Globus (February 3, 1910):97.
128. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, April 9, 1909, MAE, NS Eth. pol. int., II. Menilek had sought German expertise in foreign affairs and medicine 15 months earlier. Menilek's letter to Kaiser Wilhelm is copied in MAE, NS Eth., dossier général, V.
129. l'Herminier/Brice, Addis Ababa, May 14, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., dossier générale, IX.
130. Dr. Steinkuhler's memo is enclosed in Phillip/Knox, August 4, 1909, #30, U.S. National Archives. Although Phillips did not arrive until after the events related, the German legation

provided him with memos and reports supporting their version of the incident. Also in MAE, NS Eth., dossier générale, V.

131. Among those whom T'aitu was accused of poisoning were an ex-husband, Mekonnin's wife, and Menilek's one-time wife, Aletash Tewodros.
132. Ras Tessema/Colli, Addis Ababa, August 20, 1909, ASMAI, 54/34/141.
133. Colli/MAE, Addis Ababa, August 25, 1909, ibid.
134. Present were Drs. de Castro, Vitalien, Martin, Brielli, and l'Herminier; a chemist, Dr. Katz; and Menilek's secretary, Haile Maryam Pasha. Dr. Martin's diary, August 18, 1909. Courtesy of Peter Garretson.
135. Colli/MAE, Addis Ababa, August 25, 1909, ASMAI, 54/34/141. Phillip/Knox, Addis Ababa, August 19, 1909, U.S. National Archives.
136. Hervey/Grey, Addis Ababa, October 9, 1909, PRO, FO 371/595.
137. Interview with Dr. Henry L. Verhulst, Poison Control Branch, Public Health Service, Bethesda, Maryland, April 1970.
138. Interview with Marian Kelly, B. Pharm., 1968, Victoria College, London, April 20, 1973.
139. Le docteur nouvellement venu (Dire Dawa, 1909), enclosure in MAE, NS Eth., dossier générale, 1908-1914. Dr. Mérab is the only defender of Steinkuhler I have found (Mérab, Impressions 2, p. 43). He was recalled to Germany at the request of the German minister a few months later.
140. Grey to Gov. of India, London, July 29, 1909, PRO, FO 371/594. Martin had been attached to the Indian Army Medical Service.
141. Mérab, Impressions 2, pp. 32, 60; Dr. Martin's diary (courtesy of Peter Garretson). The French legation continued to be a source of details about Menilek's treatment, even though Dr. Martin became the treating doctor, because Dr. Vitalien was working in the palace pharmacy. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, October 31, November 11 and 23, 1909, and January 3 and 6, 1910, MAE, NS Eth., dossier générale, V.
142. Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, October 15, 1909, MAE, NS Eth., pol. int., II.
143. Vitalien-Roux memo enclosed in Brice/Pichon, Addis Ababa, October 31, 1909, ibid. Petridus (Le heros, p. 29) said that Menilek was attended by Drs. l'Herminier and Coulon, since he refused categorically the ministrations of Dr.

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Vitalien. Dr. Coulon does not appear in the 1910 diplomatic notes.

144. Mérab, Impressions 2, p. 240. When Menilek did die in December 1913, Merab maintained it was the empress who had died. There is firm agreement in the diplomatic notes of Italy, France, Great Britain and Ethiopian sources that Menilek lived until December 11-12, 1913, and that the empress died February 11, 1918.

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